

**Report on Mayor Williams' Town Hall Meeting
with the Asian and Pacific Islander Community
June, 2003**

On May 13, 2003 Mayor Anthony A. Williams held his fourth Town Hall meeting with the Asian and Pacific Islander (API) Community since he took office in 1999. The theme of this Town Hall meeting was "Opportunity for All," which demonstrated the commitment of the Williams' Administration to engaging the API community, having their voices heard through on-going dialogues, and ensuring equal access to government services for all residents.

The Town Hall meeting was preceded by a community celebration of cultural diversity and unity through cultural performances to celebrate the Asian and Pacific Islander Heritage Month in May. The Office of Asian & Pacific Islander Affairs (OAPIA) worked in conjunction with the DC Commission on Asian & Pacific Islander Affairs (DCCAPIA) to plan, organize, and coordinate the heritage celebration and Town Hall meeting.

About 300 API residents, many with limited English, and agency representatives joined the APA Heritage Month Celebration at Martin Luther King, Jr., Memorial Library and many had a dialogue with Mayor Williams and his cabinet members. Simultaneous interpretations were provided for Chinese, Korean, and Vietnamese speaking residents to ensure their participation. Transportation was also provided for Vietnamese residents and Asian senior citizens by the Department of Parks and Recreation. Several media groups such as Cable 16, Asian Fortune, World Journal (a Chinese daily newspaper), Korean Daily, Korean Times, and Vietnamese American Television also came to cover the event.

A number of the Mayor's cabinet members joined the Mayor in the dialogue with the API community, including Chief Financial Officer Natwar M. Gandhi, Deputy Director of Human Services Elizabeth Parker, Director of Department of Housing & Community Development Stanley Jackson, Chief of Fire and Emergency Medical Services Department Adrian Thompson, MPD Assistant Chief Brian Jordan, Director of Department of Employment Services Greg Irish, Director of Consumer & Regulatory Affairs David Clark, Director of Alcohol & Beverage Regulation Administration Maria Delaney, Chief Operating Officer of the Department of Health Ronald Lewis, and Director of DC Office on Aging Veronica Pace. Several other agency officials also attended the meeting.

I. Community Cultural Celebration

John Tinpe, Chairman of the DCCAPIA, welcomed everyone to the May Asian Pacific American Heritage Month Celebration and opened the celebration. Local community groups and individuals entertained the audience with cultural performances and local restaurants provided refreshments.

Among the cultural performers were: Joung Sook ParkChae, who performed a Korean fan dance; Peace Mission, who performed a Buk (drums) dance and Buk demonstration; Li Chan Huang and Yui Keung Kan, who performed Chinese Cultural musical instruments; Mr. Tsai Ken Wang, Chinese Kung Fu Master, who performed martial arts with a sword; People S.O.S. Youth, who performed a Vietnamese traditional ribbon dance; Jefferson Junior High School students, who performed Chinese Folk Dance; and Vietnamese Youth group “Natural Elements Crew,” who performed a break dance.

II. Mayor’s Town Hall Meeting

Tejpal Chawla, Commissioner of DCCAPIA, emceed the Town Hall and introduced John Tinpe, Chair of DCCAPIA.

John Tinpe, Chair of DCCAPIA, thanked the Mayor for his leadership and appointing API members to serve. He introduced all the members of the commission on API affairs.

Greg Chen, Director of OAPIA, shared the mission of OAPIA which is to promote the welfare of DC's diverse API population and to work with city agencies to ensure that a full range of services are available to and accessible by all members of this community.

Mr. Chen thanked the Mayor for the vision of inclusion he has created for all of the District's communities, his commitment to diversity, and his critical support in creating real progress for the API communities. Mr. Chen proudly acknowledged the strong partnerships OAPIA has had with a number of community-based organizations and leaders who have actively engaged the office, shared their concerns, spoken on behalf of their communities, and followed up with actions. Since the Mayor launched his API Initiative in 2000, OAPIA has worked closely with 17 District agencies to promote city services and make services more accessible to the API community, including the Limited English Proficiency (LEP) population. Many agency directors and their staff have taken serious efforts to identify resources for the API community, translate information, and form meaningful partnerships with the community.

Mayor Anthony A. Williams welcomed everyone to the Asian Pacific American Heritage Month Celebration and his Town Hall meeting and acknowledged city agency heads and representatives, DCCAPIA, commissioners of Asian Descent, and community-based organizations’ representatives who were present at the meeting.

Mayor Williams stated that diversity is the city’s strongest asset and that everyone has been able to come together, share, and learn about the API community. Mayor Williams recognized the contributions made by Asian Americans to the District of Columbia’s economy: 60 percent of “Mom and Pop” stores are owned by Asian-Pacific Americans, two-thirds of the small-business licenses issued in the city are to Asian-Pacific Americans, and the vast majority of taxi companies operating in the District are owned by South Asians.

The Mayor applauded Councilmember Jim Graham for advocating for the needs of many LEP residents, and proposing for increasing Office of Asian and Pacific Islander funding for FY04. He announced that his administration will commit another \$120,000 to expand OAPIA by adding two more FTEs. The Mayor also announced that residents can find the City Service Guide in Chinese, Vietnamese and Korean by visiting “Featured Sites” on the www.dc.gov main page.

Mayor Williams emphasized his goal to deliver on the District government’s pledge to serve all the people who live and work in the city. Language, ethnicity, and culture should not be barriers for our government to do its job effectively.

Mayor Williams highlighted the accomplishments of 17 major agencies that were part of his Initiative serving the API community through five specific objectives: Translation, diversify the workforce, Cultural Awareness Training, Community Partnership, and Community Outreach.

Last year, most of the agencies managed to translate information into Asian languages in spite of agency budget constraints. The Department of Employment Services, the Metropolitan Police Department, Department of Human Services, Department of Health, Department of Parks & Recreation, Department of Consumer & Regulatory Affairs, are among agencies that deserve recognition. To ensure an ongoing practice of translation and quality of translation, Mayor Williams also asked agencies to consider a systematic approach with a budgetary commitment.

Mayor Williams said that the District is committed to having a more diverse workforce serving the diverse population, and continuing usage of the AT&T language line when bilingual onsite staff is not available. The Department of Health hired 14 more bilingual employees in the areas of Health Promotion, Environmental Health, and Primary Care and Prevention Planning, and the Department of Mental Health hired a much-needed Vietnamese speaking mental health professional to serve the Vietnamese customers. While some agencies have had success in the hiring of bilingual staff, other agencies are in need of community help in the recruitment of bilingual staff such as police officers, fire fighters, and service front line workers. These outlets of service should reflect the diversity of our community.

Mayor Williams also advocated the need of providing cultural awareness training to the District’s employees, stating that the training is crucial to help serve our residents more effectively. He urged all agencies under his authority ensure that all employees receive the multicultural awareness training annually.

Mayor Williams indicated that District agencies made great strides to improve relations with community organizations and strengthen community partnerships in the past year. The Department of Health and the Office of Aging continued to fund community-based organizations to provide services to the Asian-Pacific Islander community. Mayor Williams also stated that, together, city agencies must build strong, meaningful partnerships with local nonprofit groups and provide technical support and grant funding

support if possible to community organizations to work toward positive change in our community.

The Mayor stated that the real reason for his Town Hall meeting was to hear from residents. He believed great things could happen through open dialogue about instituting change in our city.

Dialogue with the Mayor and his Cabinet

API residents voiced their appreciation for the Mayor's commitment to better serve the API community. Residents also voiced their concerns and problems, and asked for more assistance from the Mayor and city agencies in their own languages. The Mayor along with agencies' directors and representatives addressed residents concerns and promised to look into individual cases that were brought up during and after the Town Hall meeting.

Town Hall Meeting Questions & Answers

- 1) *Q: What is the measure that the city government is taking for SARS prevention and education? How do you address the SARS issue in the city?*

A: Deputy Director of Department of Health (DOH): Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) is a respiratory illness caused by a virus that has recently been reported primarily in Asia, North America, and Europe. There have been no cases in the District or in Maryland. In general, SARS begins with a fever greater than 100.4°F [$>38.0^{\circ}\text{C}$], headache, an overall feeling of discomfort, and body aches. After two to seven days, SARS patients develop respiratory symptoms, which include a dry cough and difficulty breathing. X-rays show evidence of pneumonia in most cases. The primary way that SARS appears to spread is by close person-to-person contact. Most cases of SARS have involved health care workers who cared for or lived with someone with SARS, or persons who had direct contact with infectious material (for example, respiratory secretions) from a person diagnosed with SARS. Potential ways in which SARS could be spread include touching surfaces or objects that are contaminated with infectious droplets and then touching your eye(s), nose, or mouth. This can happen when someone who is sick with SARS coughs or sneezes droplets onto themselves, other people, or nearby surfaces.

The District Department of Health is working with local hospitals as well as conducting citywide community forums to educate citizens about the disease. The department is working with the Capital region on a plan for managing SARS if an outbreak should ever occur. For more information, please contact the Department of Health at (202) 442- 9035 or visit the CDC website at www.cdc.gov.

- 2) *Q: (Hemi Kim from Korean American Coalition) Detective Oh of the Asian Liaison Unit was a very helpful Korean bilingual officer. Recently he got promoted and taken out of the Unit. Can you tell us when he can come back to the community?*

A: Assistant Chief Jordan of the Metropolitan Police Department (MPD): Being aware of Detective Oh's impact on the community, we are trying to send him back to the community. Right now, a lot of cases are loaded for him, therefore, as soon as we can transfer some of his cases and free up his time, we will send him back to the Unit.

- 3) *Q: According to street vendor regulations, a vendor is permitted to own two vehicles, but the rotary system only allows one vehicle per a vendor. The vendor, for his second cart, has to hire somebody paying \$ 200-300 (previously, the fee was about \$100) to make somebody to be in his place. Do you have solution for this?*

A: Department of Consumer & Regulatory Affairs (DCRA): The city is trying to reach a balance between existing retail businesses and street vendors. A pilot program was launched to try to create the right balance between retail businesses and street vendors. Depending upon the results of the pilot program, we will decide whether we will be expanding the pilot program or not. Of course, before we do anything, we will present the plan and talk with the representatives of the vendor association.

- 4) *Q: A US citizen is illegally held in China because of his religious belief in "Falun Gong." Is your office aware of this and don't you think he should be released or at least be imprisoned in US if he has done anything wrong?*

A: Mayor Williams: This is way out of my power. I urge you to write to the Congresswoman and relevant committees. I will work with you regarding this.

- 5) *Q: VP of Korean American Business Association: About 60% of Korean business people are the 1st generation with language barriers. When they go to the DCRA or other agencies, they experience being treated as handicapped or the second-class citizens. Do you have any plan to hire more bilingual officers as well as to have training program to educate the officers to treat these people with a little more dignity?*

A: Mayor Williams: We put in place several Korean Americans in the positions like Deputy of Leadership of Rotary or DCRA.

DCRA: First of all, I apologize for this situation. We have done some sensitivity training and may need some more. Also we will bring three bands to you (you even do not have to come to see us, we will go for it) and take care of things.

Alcoholic Beverage Regulation Administration (ABRA): ABRA has on staff two individuals that are bilingual in Korean and Spanish. Each member of the staff is trained to treat everyone equally, with respect and dignity, when they visit our office. ABRA is sensitive to the language barriers that exist with our licensees and we are putting forth every effort to bridge these barriers with the help of investigators and individuals that speak the language and understand the laws and regulations. All of ABRA's staff participated in the sensitivity training that was offered by API in May. ABRA is hopeful that API will offer their assistance in bridging the communication gap by offering more than sensitivity training but a means by where the Korean business community and ABRA can dialogue. It

is our continued mission to educate the businesses, as well as staff, on the laws and the treatment of each other when conducting business.

- 6) *Q: How will you solve the problem of “inside hatred” against “Falun Gong” within the Asian community?*

A: Mayor Williams: MPD is aware of this situation. Also, we will make referral to the State Department because this is an international concern.

- 7) *Q: What kind of financial assistance can you provide for the DC immigrants in terms of housing and employment?*

A: Director of Department of Employment Service (DOES): DOES maintains nine One Stop Centers strategically located throughout the city. All information on training and employment is disseminated out of the One Stop Centers. They have lists of jobs and training programs. You can go there and consult them.

Director of Department of Housing & Community Development (DHCD): We have various housing purchasing assistance programs. You can come to our office at 805 Capitol Street NE and talk with us.

- 8) *Q: The ESL program for my kids (Vietnamese children) does not exist any more. How can they get one?*

A: You can find the listing of ESL programs at www.does.dc.gov and call 724-7000.

- 9) *Q: The neighborhood is not safe (presumably there are lots of drug dealers around the area) and the police response is slow and lacking bilingual services. How can you solve this problem?*

A: MPD: We will request a sergeant to get your information and take care of it.

- 10) **Announcement** (Director of Civil Rights and Multicultural Affairs): after school ESL for kids, especially for the Vietnamese community. For the information, 442-5181 and if you need language assistance in Vietnamese call 442-5160.

- 11) *Q: Income has decreased but rent has increased. Do you have any solution for this?*

A: DHCD: We have various tenant assistance programs, especially for the API community. Please come down to our office at 805 Capitol St NE. We also have plans for the Brown Bag Lunch with API community for the convenient access of those programs.

- 12) *Q: Given that domestic violence is a big problem that affects the API community and that the federal resources that fund domestic violence programs are being cut, does the Mayor plan to show his commitment to ensuring the safety of victims of domestic violence by including a line item in the budget for domestic violence services, such as shelters and victim assistance programs?*

A: Mayor Williams: I'll ask Margret Kellems and Carolyn Graham to meet with you to see if there can be something worked out about including a line-item in the DC budget for funding of domestic violence programs.

13) *Q: Can you reinforce the neighborhood safety of the 13th and Fairmonr Streets for the night shift people?*

A: MPD: Concerns regarding neighborhood safety in the area of 13th and Fairmont Streets, NW, have been forwarded to the MPD leaders responsible for police services in that area. They have been asked to pay particular attention to crime and public safety concerns during the evening and night shifts. Thirteenth and Fairmont, NW, is located in Police Service Area (PSA) 302. PSA leader Stephanie Hilton meets with residents of the community on the third Thursday of every month, at 7 pm at Cardozo Senior High School, 13th and Clifton Streets, NW. The PSA meetings are designed to allow residents to raise concerns about crime in their community, and to get involved with the police in developing and carrying out solutions. You can contact Lt. Hilton at (202) 673-6821 or 673-2220, or via email at shilton@mpdc.org

14) *Q: About five months ago, we sent you a letter about the needs of investment in DC, but we have not received the response. Can you give us the answer?*

A: Director of OAPIA: I met you and other people on behalf of the Mayor and advised you to refer the letter to the Office of Economic Development. The city does have policies about attracting investors and your letter to the Office of Economic Development should provide more details.

15) *Q: Do you have any bilingual service for the child care?*

A: Deputy Director of the Department of Human Services: Office of Early Childhood Development (OECD) has a contract with two childcare facilities in the Adams Morgan/Mt. Pleasant areas to help recruit individuals from the Asian community to become childcare providers and for free training to obtain Child Development Associate (CDA) credentials so as to work in childcare centers. Specifically, Mary's Center has hired a bilingual Vietnamese American to outreach to the Vietnamese community to recruit Vietnamese individuals who are interested to become a childcare provider or obtain CDA credential. Calvary Bilingual Multicultural Center has approached Chinatown Services Center to outreach to the Chinese community to recruit Chinese individuals for the CDA training.

OECD plans to approach the Department of Parks and Recreation, one of OECD's vendors that operates childcare centers throughout the city including Wards 1 and 2, regarding strategies to recruit bilingual staff to serve the Asian community. We will be available to talk more about this and other strategies with you and welcome any suggestions that you may have to enhance our services to the Asian community.

16) Q: I want to learn various Asian languages. Is there any way for the government to facilitate this like as volunteer training program?

A: Mayor Williams: Government does not provide funding for the language training for general citizens. I will work with the Senator to figure this out.

17) Q: Operation Director of Boat People SOS-DC: Can we get more staffs and funding?

A: Mayor Williams: The city really appreciates the efforts you have been making and will definitely work on this.

18) Q: We are a group of senior citizens who rely on bus as transportation. This year's bus fare increase significantly. We cannot afford the large increase in transportation costs. Can you adjust the price so it will be a fair increase?

A: The fare increase under consideration by the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA) Board of Directors for fiscal year 2004 is a relatively modest fare increase. The base boarding charge on Metrorail and Metrobus will increase by \$0.10, from \$1.10 to \$1.20 per trip, an increase of just 9 percent. Mileage charges for longer trips on Metrorail will increase by \$0.02 per mile, or approximately 10 percent compared with current fares. Senior citizens and the disabled will continue to pay half the regular peak period fare, or \$0.60 per trip on Metrobus--an increase of just \$0.05 from the current elderly and handicapped fare of \$0.55 per trip. Elderly and handicapped fares on Metrorail will be half the regular peak period fare, from \$0.60 to \$1.80 per trip, throughout the day. A one-week unlimited-use Metrobus pass for the elderly and handicapped will be available for \$6. A \$10 Metrorail farecard for the elderly and handicapped will also be available.

WMATA rejected a more expensive proposed fare increase for MetroAccess, the special paratransit service for the disabled, that would have charged twice the fare for the fastest equivalent trip on Metrorail and Metrobus--up to as high as \$8.70 per trip. Instead, WMATA proposes to retain the existing policy of charging twice the fare of a similar trip on Metrobus only, an increase of \$0.20 per trip, from \$2.20 to \$2.40 per trip. Only for parking at Metrorail stations is WMATA considering a fee increase substantially greater than the approximate 10 percent fare increase proposed for bus and rail--a parking fee increase of \$0.75, from \$2.25 to \$3 per day. It is believed that people who own and use automobiles for access to Metrorail stations are better able to pay this increase than the people who rely on Metrobus or Metrorail alone, without private automobile access.

The proposed fare increase on Metrorail and Metrobus would be the first fare increase by WMATA in over eight years. During that time the cost of operating the Metro system has increased, just like most other things. In order to continue providing existing transit services, WMATA will reduce its cost of operation in fiscal year 2004 by \$24 million, and local governments have agreed to increase their operating subsidy to WMATA by approximately \$8 million above the fiscal

year 2003 level, in addition to the proposed fare increases that WMATA is considering for its passengers.

III. Awards Ceremony

Presentation of Community Service Awards

Mayor Williams presented community awards to outstanding DC employees and community members who made great contributions to the API community. The recipients of Outstanding Community Service Awards are one community activist, one youth, and two agency representatives. Mayor Williams thanked the Commission on API Affairs for soliciting nominations from DC government and the API community, and making recommendations to him.

This year's award recipients include:

- Lucinda Yeh, Asian/Pacific Islander Domestic Violence Resource Project.
- Valerie Kitchings, API Coordinator, Department of Employment Services
- Officer Jay Hong, Asian Liaison Unit, MPD
- Kim Phu Nguyen, 12th Grader, Bell Senior High School

Presentation of Certificates of Appreciation

At the recommendation of community leaders, the Mayor presented Certificates of Appreciation to:

- Sunny Shin, President, Korean American Business Association, in recognition of his leadership and contribution to the Korean business community in the District of Columbia.

The following four individuals for their contribution to Chinatown's community development in the District of Columbia:

- Peter Liu, Chinatown Architect
- Jye Tang, Chinatown Architect
- John Fondersmith, Office of Planning
- Lennox Douglas, Department of Consumer and Regulatory Affairs

Former OAPIA staff Kirstin Doan and intern Yuan Mei received Certificates of Appreciations for their public service through working at the Office of Asian and Pacific Islander Affairs.

The Town Hall meeting was adjourned at 8:30 p.m.